

Home stays a new dimension to tourism in the queen of hills [DARJEELING]

Yogendra kumar Prasad

Department of commerce, Kalimpong College

Abstract— Home stay tourism is an emerging tourism concept evolved lately in the tourism industry. Darjeeling with its multi potentialities, natural gifts, cultural richness, innocent social settings and pleasant hospitality can be a model home stay. It can give immense opportunities for rural employment, with government focusing on pro-poor programs. This form of tourism is mainly based on service, facility and attraction. Home stays are attractive alternative tourism product. The natural and cultural attributes of Darjeeling can be showcased best through home stays. Female ownership secures women's avenues for income generation. The hospitality industry must diversify its offerings to keep up with the exponential growth in tourism industry. Darjeeling cannot have big industries but tourism through home stay can flourish. The government also wants to promote it. The paper is a study of how home stay is providing dynamics to tourism industry in the hills of Darjeeling.

Index Terms— tourism business, heritage tourism, home stay, financial challenges, home stay owners.

INTRODUCTION

Darjeeling is a much sought after destination for tourist all over the world. The queen of hills Darjeeling is surrounded by definite slopes of bright green tea plantations and set against a back drop of jagged white Himalayan peaks. Tourism in Darjeeling is very old. It has a lot of attraction for the tourist. In the recent years a new concept of home stay has been growing at a very fast rate in the hills. Home stay is staying in someone's home as a paying guest for short time period. These guests are provided accommodations and services by individual family. The quest gets to experience the local way of life staying with the owners of the house. At times there can be more than one family staying in a particular house. As home stays are permitted to have a minimum of one room and maximum six rooms as

per the ministry of tourism government of Indian norms. Home stay seeks to draw tourist away from posh and crowded urban areas to the rural locality full of splendid natural surroundings. Home stay has developed community based eco tourism in the Himalayan region of India. The rich culture and the highest level of hospitality attract the tourist from all over the world every year. Home stay is aimed at encouraging employment and revenue for villagers. It has reduced outward migration to a great extent.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study has been conducted in Darjeeling home stay tourism industry. The intrinsic features of Darjeeling fit in very well considering the development of home stay as a strong tourism option. The study is based primarily on secondary data sources such as previous studies, journals, books, reports, magazines and several online data sources. The study is aimed to determine how home stay is redefining tourism in the hills of Darjeeling.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study home stay tourism in Darjeeling
- To emphasize the major opportunities available for home stay tourism in Darjeeling.
- To identify the challenges faced in the development of home stay tourism in Darjeeling.
- To study the high growth rate in this field
- To give valuable findings to make home stay tourism more viable in the hills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- 1 The role of home stay in promoting rural tourism
Mr. VENKATESH R – The study provides a

brief discussion of home stay and rural tourism development. It focused on the potentialities of home stay for rural tourism development and also discussed the positive outcomes of promoting home stay at the rural and remote areas. It revealed that home stay operation could be created alternative accommodation opportunities and a tool for promoting rural tourism and its benefits to the local community, economy and art and culture of the region.

- 2 Hospitality industry: issues and challenges (a study with special reference to Agra) Dr SURYAKANT D.KOSHTI and Ms SONAL GAURAV SHARMA - the study focuses on the issues and challenges of tourism in and around Agra city. The study highlighted the current issues of tourism industry based on human resources practices, operational practices and various financial challenges.
- 3 Socio-economic impacts of home stay accommodation in Malaysia: a study on home stay operators in Terengganu state Md. Anwar Husain Bhuiyan, Chamhuri Siwar and Shaharuddin Mohamad Ismail -home stay accommodation give focus traditional life style, local culture and customs to attract the tourist. The present study examines the economics potentiality of home stay for operators.
- 4 Home stay program an rural community development in Malaysia- Yahaya Ibrahim, Abdul Rasid Razzaq. The home stay is a tourism product that has been given special emphasis by government through the ministry of tourism. Due to the potential of home stay program to provide additional income and employment the number of home stay provider in Malaysia has been increased.

HOME STAY IN DARJEELING

Home stay in Darjeeling is typically an extension of house of the local. The landlord and his family would stay in one part of the property while there will be a separate rooms for guests. Most of the times the dining room and even the living room would be common, so that you can interact with the owner's family when you stay there.

You can also join the kitchen and lend your hand in cooking or learn from the family how to prepare local

Nepali food which is often delicious. In the evening when you are back after sightseeing you can sit with the family members in the living room and watch TV.

So a home stay in Darjeeling is all about staying in local home experiencing and enjoying Darjeeling using the way and eyes of the local. You can even participate in their day to day life to get insight into their practices and culture. This experience is completely different from a hotel.

Some of the registered home stays which have made a difference are –

- Happy valley home stay fifteen kilometer walk from the market.
- Himalayan inn, is cozy home stay run by local Nepali couple with two rooms
- Pahari soul home stay, three kilometer from main town run by a lady out of her passion
- Sameer home stay, young man and his family run two room cottages.
- Snow lion home stay, walking distance from mall run by a local Tibetan family.
- Singell home stay, located at singell tea estate in Kurseong by a worker and his family

OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOMESTAY

1.ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES OF HOMESTAY

- Transforming economic and employment opportunities to rural areas and thus alleviating poverty.
- Encouraging local and foreign investment in tourism.
- Direct economic benefits consumption of food, accommodation and purchase of souvenirs.
- Conservations of indigenous skills such as handicrafts and artisan works.

2. SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES OF HOMESTAY

- Reducing conflict among different races and nationalities.
- Retention of youth by involving them in local opportunities.
- Learning new languages, skills and builds confidence among locals.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES OF HOMESTAY

- Would be very helpful in reducing common sanitation related diseases since training would be conducted.
- Persuading the locals to keep the premises, kitchens and toilets etc. neat and clean.
- Increasing awareness on environmental conservation among host areas.

4. TOURISM RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

- Tourists get a chance to witness natural and cultural diversity.
- Increase in accommodation supply capability of the destination.
- Removing the problem of seasonality by promoting the destination all year round.

5. INFRASTRUCTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Increasing accessibility to villages by linking them with easily accessible roads.
- Increasing the number of education and training centers for capacity building.
- Increasing safety and security of locals as well tourists at the destinations in question.

CHALLENGES FOR HOMESTAY IN DARJEELING

Home stay in Darjeeling is nothing new but it is only recently that the concept is flourishing as a business opportunity. The state has also promised to incentivize and promote home stay. However owners are in a dilemma over the governments home stay policies to operate it as a business.

Anil guring a retired govt. employee running a home stay for the past few years in Darjeeling sub division says home stay is an alternative source of income for us and provides employment. However according to the practice of the government on home stay; there are certain issues that are not relevant to us. Fire license, sarai license, food license are mandatory, specifications on room and bathroom size could be hindrance to the business. They are aware that safety and security of the tourist are of immense importance but home stay means tourist living in home having food with members and adhering family norms. It cannot be compared to hotels. Owners of 50 home

stay from Darjeeling, kursong, and mirik have formed Himalayan home stay owners association (HHOA). Darjeeling cannot have big industries however tourism and home stay can flourish. So policies must be lenient towards them. At present home stays are running by having trade license. There are more than 400 home stays in Darjeeling.

Some important points are

- Poor infrastructural facilities such as good road, transpirations, electricity, healthcare, communication and other residential facilities and without these facilities it is difficult to establish and promote better services to existing as well as potential home stay visitors.
- There is lack of proper legal regulations for example registration of home stay, booking of home stay and other relevant policies.
- Improper management of resources at the destinations is also a big challenge in extension of home stay viability.
- Poor maintenance of peace, security and chaos situations which de-motivate foreign tourists to Darjeeling.

GROWTH OF HOME STAYS IN DARJEELING WITH POSITIVITY

There has been a considerable growth in number of home stay in the district of Darjeeling. In 2000 it were around 50 and now in 2018 it has gone up to more than 400 in numbers covering Darjeeling, kourseong, mirik and lamahata. The foreign tourist booking has grown more than 500% in the last 5 years. Along with the growth there are many positive development as the 400 home stay in Darjeeling, kourseong, lamahatta hills have decided to declare war against plastic bottle water which is regulated with filtered water plastic cup with earthen ones to stay the queen of hills from turning into a giant garbage dump. Water is being served in thermo steel or uni-steel bottles to be returned after use. Tea to be served in earthen cups .the Himalayan home stay owners association brought out a cycle rally in the hills on the world tourism day to generate awareness. Darjeeling is one of the most untidy hill towns because of the rampant use of plastic. Darjeeling economy resolves around the tourism with

every family dependent on this industry directly or indirectly. Lacks of tourists visit the hills every year and leave behind thousand of tones of plastic trash. Garbage finds its ways into sewages, rivers, and streams triggering landslides. Pollution is also causing climate change.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

- The local people of the proposed home stay tourism destination should be technically assisted to prepare home stay planning and development.
- Loan subsidy and other fiscal incentives should be provided to the local people for upgrading their existing facilities i.e. bed, rooms, bathrooms, tap, cleanliness etc.
- Home stay tourism destination should be connected with other tourism stakeholders of the country.
- Government should provide “LEAVE TRAVEL CONCESSION” for public servants and promote them to go on home stay tourism.
- There is a need of development of home stay tourism database so that tourist can easily explore, choose, and book their stay.

CONCLUSION

Home stay accommodation is an excellent way of experiencing the authentic style of living of a destination. Guests staying here can truly get to live the life as the locals do, in a way that they would not be able to in a hotel. They get to know about the culture and history of the destination. Home stay operators however need to work on the hygiene levels as well as provision of basic amenities to the travelers. They should also take care to have enhanced security measures that will greatly enhance the comfort level of their guests. It is also important to keep in mind that they should coordinate with the locals to maintain the natural and cultural beauty of the destination.

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